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ABSTRACT

Triple T, a graduate project to educate (train) teacher trainers, allows participants to view the schools as a total system and gives educators a means of training people to change that system. It offers an opportunity to develop an alternative means for graduate education. An important element in this program is parity. While parity is more a feeling of having equal power in the decision making process than a result of organizational design, it is essential that the structure not hinder attempts at this power, and that some mechanisms for achieving parity exist. The concern here is with how parity exists between individuals in the university. One major problem is the role of the graduate student--he is thought of as a full member of the university by everyone except the faculty. In any TTT project, this relationship must be altered if the concept of parity is to have any meaning. If TTT is successful, institutional change will follow. Suggested elements of an organizational structure which would allow parity are: 1) New graduate students should select graduate committee from people sympathetic to TTT objectives, but not presently active in it; 2) No course work, for grades, should be taken from any professor he is currently working with on the project; and, 3) No credit should be "earned" in a TTT program. If it seems important that a student receive credit, it should be given. (JLB)

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A New Parity Formula: Triple T

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A New Parity Formula: Triple T

One of the most elusive items in any Triple T program is parity. Those of you who are, or have been, involved in a Triple T project have undoubtly heard many different meanings attached to this term. The most fruitful way to think of parity though is as an attitude. Parity is something that one feels rather than being an item in the formal organizational structure. Some people may not agree with this position and feel very strongly that parity should be thought of as some sort of beaucratic organization. These people would contend that if all groups have representative members on all of the decision-making committees then parity exists in the program. While this may seem reasonable, it is my contention that the proper organizational design operates as a necessary condition rather than as a sufficient one.

To have representation on certain boards actually does little to create a feeling that one has some say in decisions which affect one's self. No organizational structure can possibly insure the feeling of having power in the decision-making process. It is essential though that the structure not hinder attempts at this power. With this in mind I will offer some suggestions as to how the graduate students ought to be organized in the project. It is important that we remember this organization can be designed in such a way that the student be involved in a parity situation, or it can be such that the achievement of parity is possible. It cannot though guarantee parity relationships.

The relationships between the spheres of school, community and university in any Triple T project, are constantly under examination to ascertain if all the groups involved are having equal inputs into the programs and especially inputs into those decisions which effect themselves personally. What we are concerned with at this time though is how parity exists between individuals

within one component; the university. If all the individuals in the program feel that they have as much to say about decisions as anyone else in the program then parity exists. It is this feeling of having as much influence as anyone else that is important. If one does not have this attitude then there is no parity as far as that individual is concerned. All that the organizational structure can do is insure that some mechanisms for achieving parity exist.

It should be obvious that parity, as we are discussing it here, is a protean thing. This presents problems since the organizational structure is not a similar item. The structure exists from the first of the year until the end of the year, with only minor changes. Thus, if steps are not taken at the beginning of the program then there may be problems all year long. Also, while this organizational structure can insure that parity will not exist there is little that a structure can do to insure that there will indeed be parity.

The Graduate Fellow

The role of the graduate student is particularly complicated and perhaps one of the more difficult to work with in Triple T. One problem is that the graduate student is often seen by the community and public school people as being a full member of the academic community. This is the same community which has traditionally not accepted him, or her, as a full participating member, but rather as a novice who seeks entrance into the order. There is also little chance that this academic community will suddenly accept the student as a peer simply because he is working in Triple T. Thus, the graduate student is thought of as a member of the university except by those people who control the membership within the university; the faculty. The result is that at some time in the project all graduate students suffer from some sort of identity conflict. The problem is heightened as one moves between the project site and the campus (something one does almost daily). At the site there may

be one sort of atmosphere and in the same day on campus, with the same people, there may well be a whole different set of roles with a totally different type of atmosphere.

This problem never occurred in the traditional graduate program. The graduate student was always thought of as a student; one who must therefore suffer through the apprenticeship in just the same manner as all previous people have. The student was always the learner, the senior staff members were the teachers. To be sure there were verbalisims offered to the effect that this was not the case, but any graduate student who was being honest, both with himself and his peers admited that he never really felt equal to the faculty.

In any Triple T program this relationship must be altered: It must be altered if the concept of parity is to have any real meaning. Thus, if Triple T is successful then it is insured that institutional change will take place. If senior staff members, the third T, must listen to graduate students voice their ideas and opinions then there exists the possibility that the senior staff will come to see that graduate students do indeed have workable ideas (along with the enthusiastically presented bad ones). I do not think that it is necessary for the graduate student and his professional colleagues to view themselves equals in all spheres, rather I am suggesting that they could very well come to view each other as equals in terms of interests and motivations. Then perhaps it will come to pass that both groups will see that neither group has a corner on the market of original ideas and wisdom, nor, is the other group devoid of original thought or sound ideas.

Triple T has the possibility of doing all this but it is only a possibility. As I have looked at some of the programs, and talked with their participants, the possibility indeed seems remote. Parity does not seem to exist in many of the programs. Rather there is either a patronizing attitude towards the stu-

dent, or else it is the same old graduate program dressed up in a new cloak of rhetoric. "Listening to the ideas of young people" is not parity. Listening to a fellow professional concerned about teaching and teacher education is parity. A condescending attitude covered over with sympathetic words is as bad as the old arrangement; perhaps worse, at least before a person did not have to listen to one's elders acting interested about "the concerns of youth". In the end parity must be how an individual feels about how others are treating him. The problem then becomes one of arranging a graduate program which will minimize the sources of possible conflict.

How can a program insure that it effectively creates a parity relationship with the graduate fellows? I will attempt to list a few organizational suggestions as points for further discussion.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. It is imparitive that new graduate students select graduate committee from people who are sympathetic to the objectives of Triple T, but not presently active in Triple T.

The reason for this first recommendation is to remove any feeling of restraint that a graduate student might have about working with a member of his graduate committee. It must be remembered that this committee will be the group which decides whether or not the doctoral degree is granted. This is the reason for the student's being in school in the first place, not his dedication to Triple T, important as that program might be. While cases of spiteful actions are rare on this level nonetheless the possibility does exist. There is always the question of just how honest a student can be with members of this committee without suffering some form of reprisal. While this question seems of little importance to most faculty members, I assure you that graduate students do give it some thought.

By following this first recommendation, complete honesty in any Triple T discussion is assured. The important thing is to keep people from self-cen-

sorship. This practice does nothing to aid the project and does even less to alter the structure of public education, the purpose of Triple T. If changes are to be made, and it is deemed important that these changes be made through a parity approach, then it is essential that any possible hinderence to complete honesty and open discussion be removed. We can ill afford, as I have seen happen, the graduate student who is afraid to speak for fear that a member of his graduate committee will disagree.

Recommendation 2. No course work, for grades, should be taken from any professorial fellow he is currently working with on the project.

This, as was the first recommendation, is designed to keep the fear or reprisal in any discussion to a minimum. If a student desires to take a course from an instructor with whom he is currently working he should be allowed that priviledge. It should, though, be on a pass-fail basis. This is designed to remove any hesitation on the student's part to discuss and act freely on issues within Triple T. This again, is simply a mechanism to insure that there will be no reason to ever feel threatned. As with the first recommendation it is designed more to guard against perceived, or imagined problems than it is to actually protect anyone from what is common practice. The actual act of hostility is rare; I am not convinced that the feeling of being threatned is quite so rare.

This might also be the place where the whole question of course work needs to be raised. Perhaps there should not be any such work for Triple T participants. Instead there might be a series of tutorials, along with interest groups, within the Triple T operation. These interest groups might be composed of any participant who happens to have an interest in whatever that particular group is considering. Since the total staff on any Triple T operation is fairly large, and many circulate through for a small amount of time there should be no problem in getting enough different types of people together. These ideas

might only work though if required course work was kept at a minimum.

Recommendation 3. No credit should be "earned" in a Triple T program. If it is deemed important that a student receive credit for his work it should be made clear that he is being given credit. It should be something free and clear from all responsibilities.

This will be one of the more difficult items for many to accept but it seems to be essential if there is to be a different type of graduate program coming from Triple T. Many people seem to have a difficult time with the idea of giving credit away unless there is a paper, with footnotes, in return. In our pilot year some people (almost all of the public school personnel) felt that everyone should be doing something to justify their existence on the project staff. It was always preferable that what one did had a great amount of visibility, hence the somewhat cynical practice of doing many things only because it would be good for people to see you doing it. It should always be made clear that one is not in Triple T to earn credits, or a check, but rather to contribute what he can to Triple T, and indirectly to the American educational system. What form this contribution will take must be largely determined by the individual participant.

My personal feeling is that no credit should be given for work in Triple T; rather this activity should be kept in mind as the graduate committee decides what course work the student should take. This eliminates all need for determining just how much credit activity in Triple T is worth and what one must do to receive this amount of credit. This no credit option though might not be as easy to implement in the project as the notion of just giving a certain amount of credit hours for involvement in the project.

While some of these recommendations may seem far too stringent and too restrictive in consideration of a normal graduate program I contend that they are not. Triple T should offer an opportunity for a radically new graduate program rather than being a way to fund an existing one. Some of the Triple T

projects that I have seen in operation are using this opportunity as a means of attracting graduate students into an already existing, but weak, program. This ought not to be the purpose, rather the Triple T projects must be an alternative to what presently exists. If a school's present program is weak, it is usually a sign that the program is bad, something that no amount of money can cure. There are a great many graduate schools around and very few Triple T projects. It should be obvious then that we do not need to build more graduate schools, but rather we must devise new ways of educating (and training) future teacher trainers. The emphasis in any Triple T program should be on developing new types of programs for graduate students. Each project should try a different sort of approach. It seems axiomatic that in such a program no two projects need, or perhaps should, be alike. The emphasis must not lie in the creation of more Ph.D.'s but rather in looking at new ways of educating them.

The Possibilities of a Triple T Experience

The very first role that all of the participants must become familiar with is that of the teacher. Even if one has been a teacher in the public schools, Triple T is advantegous in that the graduate is not now a teacher and he may take a fresh and hopefully more objective look at what it is that a teacher is or should be. It is enlightening for all concerned to look not only at what teachers do but also how they feel about what they are doing. To actually understand the latter requires a certain degree of objectivity which is difficult to obtain while one is actually teaching. This understanding also necessitates direct daily contact with the teachers. The combination of these two items can be readily accomplished in a Triple T program.

Another role which graduate fellows have is an opportunity to both view and work with the social studies consultant or district specialist. This task is as frustrating and complex as any position in a school district. The only way anyone would normally be able to understand this position is to have actually

had the job. Triple T though allows a person to have enough contact with the job to at least reach some reasonable conclusions about what is possible and what is not possible from this position.

An example of how wide-ranging a Triple T participant's role might be seen by comparing this curriculum director's role with that of an administrator's. The school principal is normally responsible for all that goes on in his school, but usually he finds it impossible to be totally familiar in all that goes on above and around his own level. A participant in Triple T by moving from one level to another though can come to understand very quickly what an administrator can and cannot do and also why some things are so difficult. The main reason for this is that a participant may move about very freely and hear all sides of any given issue or problem since he has no set role in the normal school organization. By setting his own role the graduate fellow can avoid the isolation which often accompanies a leadership position.

For most of the graduate fellows, or any participant for that matter, this is the only time one may be able to operate in this non-attached capacity. The possibilities become limitless when a person has nothing specific to do. This type of role (or lack of one) can cause the participant some anxiety in the beginning of the experience. With experience and time most people can not only learn to exist in this type of position, but also gain a great deal of experience in the process. Seldom in one's professional life does a person have the opportunity to examine the schools as a total system, as is possible in Triple T. In order to take full advantage of this opportunity a person must keep his status as flexible as possible.

If we contrast the possibilities of Triple T with the traditional graduate program the advantages of a new approach become obvious. In the normal graduate program a person brings to the program all of his personal professional experiences, but at best this normally consists only of experience as a teacher

or an administrator. The graduate student who has been involved in community affairs is rare indeed. Thus, the graduate student brings to his doctoral program a limited background and very little is done to supplement this with a broader set of experiences. Neither is there much attempt to impress upon the student the need to bring these experiences together in some sort of gesalt, nor is much done in getting him to see the public schools as a system of coordinated parts.

Triple T offers this opportunity to view the schools as a total system, but more important it also gives educators a means of training people to change that system. One of the current suggestions for changing public education is to offer people alternative educational systems. What I have been suggesting this afternoon is that Triple T offers us opportunity to develop an alternative means for graduate education. To use Triple T as a way to finance, or enrich a present graduate program may be a mistake. Rather, we might look at Triple T as a way to develop a new form of graduate education. The possibility for something different is present; whether or not the promise is fullfilled remains to be seen.